



Black Lawrence Press

NO SPARE PEOPLE



ERIN HOOVER

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Poetry. Women's Studies / Gender Studies. Writing About the South. *No Spare People* documents the joys and perils of a tiny mother-daughter family navigating life on the margins. From poems about finding autonomy as a queer, unpartnered parent by choice in the South to those chronicling a generation's economic instability, Hoover rejects so-called "acceptable losses" stemming from inequalities of gender, race, and class. The book asks, what happens to the woman no longer willing to live a lie? How does language invent not only identity, but possibility?

Advance Praise

Erin Hoover's second collection, *No Spare People*, recalls to me the sobering effect of encountering Adrienne Rich's work in the late '80s. These poems deal in reality, eschewing the fantastic ... This is a deeply intellectual and expertly wrought collection.

—Cate Marvin

The poems in *No Spare People* illuminate the injustices of income inequality, misogyny, womanhood and motherhood in America with an expanse of time and geography.

—K. Iver

[These] poems do not give up, continually questioning the constraints of an American South in which "some days, I'm the pioneer wife, / keeper of the homestead, but others / I'm absurdly educated for a uterus."—Jessica Jacobs

These are hard poems in that they press far past the facile reductive binaries of good and evil, savior and saved, and into something—a lyric, a voice—that feels a little more complicated, a little more like our own world.

—Kaveh Akbar

Erin Hoover was born in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. She is the author of a previous poetry collection, *Barnburner*, which won Elixir Press's Antivenom Poetry Award and a Florida Book Award. Her poems have appeared in *The Best American Poetry* and in journals such as *Cincinnati Review*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Shenandoah*, and *The Sun*. Hoover lives in Tennessee and teaches creative writing at Tennessee Tech University. She curates and hosts a poetry reading series, Sawmill Poetry, and produces the "Not Abandon, but Abide" monthly interview series for the *Southern Review of Books*. Visit her website at erinhooverpoet.com



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At the child support office

the children were surprisingly calm. Later I'd learn
what my own child would accept, grown used
to our nomadic life, but that was years away. Barely

a person at two weeks, unlike me, she couldn't focus
on the men shuffling to the window to murmur
words like *cohabitare* instead of what I would say,

lived with, *paternity* instead of father. I understood
that the men used legal rather than familial words
because we were in an open-plan, echoing room

that wasn't about families at all. I too had come
to make a declaration, that my baby was mine alone.
At my turn, the clerk asked if I had proof, and I looked

down at the fold of my child's mouth, her animal
hands. I felt the diaper that held together my body
ripped open not long before – I could hardly walk –

but maybe that only proved, like her birth certificate,
that I was her mother. You can't prove a negative,
I wanted to say, but the nurse taking blood

in the corner of the room wanted that, the man
with his sleeve rolled up wanted it too. *I see a father
listed*, the clerk said, and told me a French name,

man piloting a swamp boat through my imagination.
A stranger who, peering under our car seat bonnet,
would be as confused as I am at how the State of Florida

found a husband for me. Clerical error of a man.
In response, I supplied the Latinate words that conjured
my baby, *artificial insemination*, for all to hear,

handing over the letter I asked my doctor to write.
My word, I had to do that, get a letter like that.
I've learned that I can't tell people what they don't

already believe, but I fought for that blank space.
This isn't a confession but the facts that surround us,
as everyone has, and once my child's fake father was gone,

I thanked the clerk and ran through the parking lot
through the gathered, hissing geese. I drove home,
opened my shirt, and on that spring day, fed my child.